

Andrew Jackson to James Allen, March 31, 1827, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JAMES ALLEN.¹

¹ N. Y. Pub. Lib., Ford MSS. Richard A. Buckner was member of Congress from Kentucky 1823 to 1829. References to a "Frank Johnston" seem to indicate that the other gentleman alluded to was Francis Johnson, member of Congress from Kentucky 1819 to 1827. The only "Johnston" in either house in 1827 was Josiah S. Johnston, senator from Louisiana.

Hermitage, March 31, 1827.

D'r Sir, I have recd. your letter of the 22d instant and feel greatly obliged for the information communicated by it. It breathes such evidence of candour and honest sentiment, that notwithstanding my hitherto determination to interfere in no wise with the Presidential election, or to write upon the subject to any one, I am persuaded in this case, the most scrupulous will acquit me of all sinister motives, when repelling charges of so heinous a character as those stated by you to be made by Messrs. Buckner and Johnston.

At the tribunal of the people it will be ascertained that I never have solicited the office of President of the U. States. There frank and flattering call placed me before them as a candidate for that distinguished station; and hence my determination ever has been to leave to their unbiassed Judgment the solution regardless of the abuse and slander heaped upon me by the minions of power and the panders of corruption. But in this class of wretches I could not have calculated to find any who enjoyed the confidence and respect of the people. I had a hope for the honor of the country that no man who occupied the exalted station of a member of congress could be made to *lie* or gain say, as occasion

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might require, in order to maintain the power of a coalition whose object seems rather to be my destruction than the advancement of the interests of their country.

I could not have believed that men elevated as Messrs. Buckner and Johnston have been, were so lost to all respect for truth and character as to take up Jesse Benton's pamphlet² for the purpose of vending tissues of falsehood and calumny to the credulous and unwary, such, however, appears to be their conduct, and if, the truth, which is mighty and will ultimately prevail shall consign them to infamy and disgrace along with poor Jesse, they cannot blame me. It can be no apology for them to plead that they are not the authors of the charges, neither was poor Jesse. He only put his signature to the pamphlet, controuled by the same influence which dictated the famous letter of my military friend H. at Washington, Pennsylvania, the same influence which now operates upon the honorable Messrs. Buckner and Johnson as it was upon the puppets.

² See p. 266, *ante*, note 2.

The charge relative to the execution of the six militia men, is the only allegation of Mr. Buckner which you say you are not prepared to refute from a knowledge of the facts, or from documentary evidence. I shall therefore first bestow some time upon it.

At the close of the Creek war the Forts in that Nation were ordered to be occupied and garrisoned. For this purpose Col. P. Pipkin was ordered with a Regt. of drafted militia for six months into the service of the U. States. Whilst stationed at Fort Jackson on the 19th or 20th of Sept., 1814, a meeting took place headed by a Captain, and in the presence of the Col. forced the guard, seized the provisions, burned the bake house and marched off forcibly leaving the Col. destitute of provisions, and without a competent garrison in the midst of the Creek nation, stirred up to hostility against us at that time by the agents of the British: at a period too when the British with an overwhelming army were preparing to invade the lower country. It was reported to me about the time of my appeal to your venerable patriot Shelby, when I made the requisitions on Tennessee for aid in so solemn

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a crisis. Orders were immediately given for the apprehension of the mutineers, Col. Pipkin being instructed to join me at the *Cut off* with the remainder of his Regt. and Genl. Coffee's volunteers from Tennessee on the march to Pensacola where the British were rendezvoused.

The mutineers becoming alarmed, all except nine of the ringleaders returned, were pardoned, and remained with their Col. during the whole of that campaign. These ringleaders were taken, and brought to Mobile after I had left that section of command; and when I was at New Orleans were tried by a Court martial at Mobile, and condemned to be shot. Three were pardoned, having been recommended to mercy by the court which tried them, the ballance were shot, but not as Mr. Buckner falsely pronounces in his stump speech for crimes committed after their term of service had expired; but for crimes of the deepest dye, perilous to the country, at a time when every patriot's arm was stretched, when every nerve of the Govt. was strained to defend our liberties and our country from conquest and subjugation. It was at this period, too, the Hartford convention were giving to the enemy every encouragement of success either by a division or conquest of the states. These facts are on record, and ought to have been known to Mr. Buckner before he undertook the commission of traduction and slander. The mutiny, the order for the apprehension, the trial etc. are, or ought to be on file at Washington; or, if not, a copy of the record can be had from the papers of my Adjt. Genl. Thus you see, Sir, with the exception of my being commander of the division, Mr. Buckner had as much to do with the execution of these men as I had. It is well there are virtuous and good citizens who have independence and strength to check the career of the wicked and ambitious, and in whose support and approbation there is ample reward for patriotic service. The man who knows me not, and can yet charge me with a crime which from the known history of the times must be untrue, and whilst the allegation is scarcely made has the hardihood to say *he has sent to Tennessee for proof* , would not only rob me of my hard earned reputation, but betray his country if he had the power.

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Inclosed I send a reply made to Jesse Benton's pamphlet on its first appearance, which I have no doubt Mr. Buckner has seen, and he must have been very negligent indeed if he has not read the report of the Senate, my reply and memorial, where many, if not all, the charges are proved to be false.

You say that Majr. Yancey informed you that Frank Johnston told the people in his stump speech (on the same day Mr. Buckner spoke and made his charges, 32 miles apart) that I left Congress about the time the sedition and alien laws passed, meaning to insinuate that I would have voted for the law if I had been there. This statement Mr. Johnston knew to be false when he made it. All my public life gives evidence of my opposition to the alien and sedition laws as well as the general administration of John Adams. My votes in the senate will shew that upon all the questions I voted with the republican party, with Tazwell, Mason and others: and being continually in the then minority I resigned to make room for Genl. Smith whose age and weight of character I thought would add to the republican strength.

You add that Frank Johnston further stated, I had drawn pay as Genl. for staying at home, and for seven servants, meaning to insinuate that I recd. pay for seven servants. This is another wilful misrepresentation, and I challenge with boldness Mr. Johnston to the production of any account in which I have ever charged for seven servants. I never have drawn a cent of public money in my life to which I was not both justly and legally entitled. Let us examine the charge of staying at home. I returned from the Creek campaign in May 1814, recd. the appointment of Major Genl. unsolicited by me, with orders to proceed to the south in June. I recd. the submission of the Creeks in July 1814, and never saw my family until after the close of the war. I returned to Nashville in May 1815, and there established my Headquarters. In Octr. I went to the City of Washington, arriving there with my family in November when my life was dispaired of. I left there the 24th Decr. under orders, and reached Nashville 2d February, 1816; and on the 9th of that month proceeded to the lower country, and took a recognizance of the whole coast and inlets for the purpose of selecting scites for the creation of Fortifications. I returned to Nashville in the latter end

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of May 1816, where my attention was called to the defence of the North Western frontier then likely to be attacked by the Indians. In Septr. of that year I was ordered as one of the commissioners to hold a treaty with the Chickasaws, Creeks and Cherokees which I did, reaching Nashville in December 1816, from whence I was ordered to explore the country for a proper scite for a Foundry and arsenal, and to lay out, and cause to be surveyed and opened a military road from Nashville to Orleans. This was done. In the fall of 1817 I was ordered as one of the Commissioners to hold a Treaty with the Cherokees: this service was not long performed, when I recd. an order to proceed to Fort Scott, collect a sufficient force, and put a speedy end to the war with exemplary punishment for the unprovoked crimes of the enemy. I performed this duty, worn down with sickness privations and fatigue; so much so that my friends did not expect me to recover; yet I reached Nashville in June 1818. In the fall 25 of that year, associated with the venerable sage and patriot Gov. Shelby, a treaty was held with the Chickasaws by which we obtained a cession from them of all the lands north of the southern boundary of Tennessee. From my return to Nashville in that year, I was employed in superintending the military road, removing intruders from the Indian lands, and by the duties of my division, being under confidential orders preparing for the defence of the lower country expected to be invaded. In the month of Octr. 1820, I, with Genl. Hinds, held a treaty with the Choctaws, and shortly after recd. orders to march for and receive possession of the Floridas. This brings me to the first of June 1821 which terminated my military service. With those services which I have enumerated, the additional duty of superintending my division, occupied every hour of my time. During my whole military command, I never had a furlough, was always under orders, and altho' in wretched health was never on the sick report. I often suggested my wish to resign, but was always prevented by the request of the President. So much for the charge of Mr. Johnston, of staying at home, and of drawing the pay of a *sinecure*.

I have been thus particular to put it in your power to correct the misrepresentations of Messrs. Buckner and Johnston whom I know to be the mere panders of the coalition of

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which you speak. It cannot be possible if their real characters are unmasked in time that the highminded people of Kentucky will deem them worthy of their confidence.

With sincere thanks to you, Sir, allow me to assure you, that altho' personally strangers, I duly appreciate the favor conferred upon me by the opportunity afforded of opposing to the calumnies of my enemies a naked statement of the truth. Truth has been my shield in all the perils which I have encountered for the cause of my country. I shall never part with it for the sake of office.

Allow me to subscribe myself

Yr. very obliged and Humble servt.